

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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DODE-00 PM-05 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NASA-01 NSC-05
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7340
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 3499

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TSP, NMOC, BR
SUBJECT: FINAL TEST LAUNCH OF BRAZILIAN SONDA-III SPACE
PROBE

REFC BRASILIA 1638 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. SUMMARY. THE FINAL TEST LAUNCH
OF THE BRAZILIAN-DEVELOPED SONDA-III SPACE PROBE CARRIED
A 60 KILOGRAM PAYLOAD TO AN ELEVATION OF 610 KILOMETERS. A
CONCURRENT MEETING OF THE INTER-AGENCY COMMISSION RESPONSIBLE
FOR THE BRAZILIAN SPACE PROGRAM
DISCUSSED FUTURE PLANS FOR THE PROGRAM, INCLUDING PLANS FOR
INCREASED INTER-NATIONAL COOPERATION, BUT NOT WITH THE USG.
THERE IS A LACK OF CLEAR DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN MILITARY CAP-
ABILITIES BECAUSE OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND MANUFACTURE OF VEHICLES
FOR BOTH APPLICATIONS BY THE SAME GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.
END SUMMARY.

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2. ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL PRESS OF 27 APRIL, THE
FIFTH AND FINAL TEST LAUNCH OF THE BRAZILIAN SONDA-
III SPACE PROBE TOOK PLACE AT 1600 HRS, BRAZIL TIME,
ON 26 APRIL 1978 AT THE BARREIRA DO INFERNO LAUNCH
FACILITY NEAR NATAL. THE THREE-STAGE VEHICLE, WHICH
IS APPROXIMATELY 10 METERS IN LENGTH AND 60 CENTIMETERS
IN DIAMETER, ATTAINED A MAXIMUM ELEVATION OF 610 KILO-

METERS AND A MAXIMUM SPEED OF 3100 METERS PER SECOND DURING ITS 13 MINUTE FLIGHT. LAUNCH WEIGHT WAS 1596 KILOGRAMS, INCLUDING AN UNRECOVERED 60 KILOGRAM INSTRUMENTATION PAYLOAD.

3. THE LAUNCH WAS MARKED BY MODEST PUBLICITY AND THE PRESENCE OF GENERAL ARARIPE MACEDO, THE MINISTER OF THE AIR FORCE, AND OF GENERAL TACITO THEOFILO GASPAR DE OLIVEIRA, THE CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES GENERAL STAFF. ACCORDING TO COLONEL HUGO DE OLIVEIRA PIVA, THE DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF SPACE ACTIVITIES, WHICH WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS FINAL TEST LAUNCH, AND TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL ARCHIMIDES GOMES, THE TECHNICAL VICE-DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE, THE SONDA-III HAS NOW COMPLETED ITS TESTING PHASE, AND JOINS TWO OTHER PROBE ROCKETS NOW PRODUCED BY AVIBRAS, THE SONDA II (ANOTHER THREE-STAGE VEHICLE CAPABLE OF LIFTING A 50 KILOGRAM PAYLOAD TO AN ALTITUDE OF 250 KILOMETERS) AND THE SONDA-1 (USED FOR METEOROLOGICAL RESEARCH UP TO 70 KILOMETERS) IN THE INVENTORY OF LAUNCH VEHICLES AVAILABLE TO THE BRAZILIAN SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES.

4. THE LAUNCH OF THE SONDA-III WAS PRECEDED BY A MEETING OF THE INTER-AGENCY BRAZILIAN COMMISSION ON SPACE ACTIVITIES (COBAE) AT THE BARREIRA DO INFERNO
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LAUNCH SITE TO REVIEW FUTURE PROGRAMS IN LIGHT OF A NEW PLAN FOR THE BRAZILIAN SPACE PROGRAM APPROVED ON 14 APRIL 1978 BY PRESIDENT GEISEL. ALTHOUGH THE MEETING WAS CLOSED TO NEWSMEN AND THE CONTENT OF THE NEW PLAN WAS NOT REVEALED, THE PRESS REPORTS DID CONTAIN REFERENCES TO AN APPARENT PROVISION FOR INCREASED COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES IN BOTH DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRAZILIAN PROGRAM AND IN USE OF THE BARREIRA DO INFERNO LAUNCH SITE. AN EXAMPLE OF SUCH COOPERATION WHICH HAD BEEN REPORTED EARLIER, IN THE 15 MARCH GAZETA MERCANTIL, IS THE USE OF THE BARREIRA DO INFERNO SITE TO TRACK FRENCH MISSILES LAUNCHED FROM FRENCH GUIANA, FOR WHICH PURPOSE BRAZIL HAD ACQUIRED FROM THE FRENCH SOME US\$2 MILLION WORTH OF EQUIPMENT FOR THE BARREIRA DO INFERNO SITE. ON 15 MARCH, COLONEL PIVA HAD BEEN QUOTED AS COMMENTING THAT THERE WAS ONLY ONE COUNTRY WITH WHICH HE SERIOUSLY DOUBTED THAT BRAZIL WOULD BE PREPARED TO COOPERATE IN ITS SPACE PROGRAM: THE UNITED STATES. PIVA SAID THAT THIS WAS BECAUSE THE US "HAS DISCOVERED THAT THE BEST WAY TO KEEP A POOR AND UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRY POOR AND UNDERDEVELOPED IS TO SELL IT A PACKAGE OF ALREADY-DEVELOPED TECHNOLOGY,

WHICH PERMITS A MINIMUM OF ABOSRPTION OF TECHNOLOGY BY
THE PURCHASER."

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5. ACCORDING TO COLONEL DENNY EIRAS BATISTA, THE
SECRETARY OF COBAE, THE BRAZILIAN ROLE IN DEVELOPING
THE NEW COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES
IS AT THE MOMENT LIMITED TO BEING A WILLING RECIPIENT
OF PROPOSALS FROM THIRD PARTIES. IN MARCH, COLONEL PIVA
HAD DESCRIBED THE EXISTING AGREEMENTS (THE BRAZILIAN-FRG
AGREEMENT FOR AEROSPACE COOPERATION OF 1969 AND THE
BRAZILIAN-FRENCH AGREEMENT FOR AEROSPACE COOPERATION
OF 1973, MORE COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE COBAE-CNES AGREE-
MENT FROM THE ACRONYMS OF THE AGENCIES INVOLVED) AS
INVOLVING THE TRANSFER OF AEROSPACE TECHNOLOGY. HE
DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN THE TWO BY INDICATING THAT WHILE
THE FRENCH AGREEMENT FOCUSED ON LAUNCH VEHICLE TECHNO-
LOGY (AND WAS THEN IN THE PROCESS OF BEING EXPANDED),
THE GERMAN AGREEMENT ONLY COVERED COMPONENT TECHNOLOGY,
BECAUSE, AS COLONEL PIVA WAS CAREFUL TO EMPHASIZE,
THERE ARE RESTRICTIONS ON THE TYPE OF WORK WHICH THE
FRG CAN UNDERTAKE IN THE MISSILE AREA.

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6. FUTURE PLANS OUTLINED TO THE PRESS AFTER THE 26 APRIL COBAE MEETING CALLED FOR CONTINUING WORK ON THE SONDA-IV, WHICH IS A FOLLOW-ON USING COMPONENTS OF THE SONDA-III AND INTENDED TO BE ABLE TO LIFT A 500 KILOGRAM PAYLOAD TO 1000 KILOMETERS ALTITUDE BY 1981. IN ADDITION, WORK WITH THE FRENCH WILL BE CONTINUING, WITH THE PROPOSED TARGET DATE FOR LAUNCHING A SATELLITE (APPARENTLY WITH A SEPARATE LAUNCH VEHICLE BEING JOINTLY DEVELOPED WITH THE FRENCH) NOW SET FOR 1985. INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE PROGRAM WERE DIVIDED, WITH THE INSTITUTE FOR SPACE RESEARCH (INPE), SUBORDINATED TO THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (CNPQ), BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE SATELLITE, AND WITH THE IAE, A COMPONENT OF THE AERO-SPACE TECHNICAL CENTER (CTA) AT SAO JOE DOS COMPOS, SAO PAULO, UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE MINISTRY OF THE AIR FORCE, RESPONSIBLE FOR LAUNCH VEHICLE DEVELOPMENT. ALTHOUGH COLONEL PIVA HAS OFTEN REITERATED THE PEACEFUL NATURE OF THE BRAZILIAN SPACE PROGRAM, HE ACKNOWLEDGED IN REMARKS REPORTED IN THE 15 MARCH GAZETA MERCANTIL THAT THE IAE HAD DEVELOPED "SOME" MISSILES WHICH WERE BEING MANUFACTURED BY AVIBRAS FOR EXPORT. THE ONLY EXAMPLES HE CITED WERE "DEFENSIVE" AIR-TO-GROUND MISSILES. END UNCLASSIFIED.

7. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. COMMENT: COLONEL PIVA HAS A RECORD OF MAKING AMBIGUOUS ASSERTIONS CONCERNING THE PEACEFUL INTENT OF THE BRAZILIAN SPACE PROGRAM. AT THE OUTSET, HE HAS ACKNOWLEDGED THE IAE'S DUAL ROLE IN DEVELOPING BOTH MILITARY AND SPACE-PROGRAM ROCKETS AND MISSILES (AND THE AVIBRAS ROLE IN MANUFACTURING BOTH TYPES ONCE DEVELOPMENT IS COMPLETED BY IAE). IN THE 15 MARCH GAZETA MERCANTIL ARTICLE, HE WAS QUOTED
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AS SAYING THAT IT WOULD TAKE LESS THAN A YEAR TO CONVERT THE SONDA SERIES OF SPACE PROBES TO MILITARY PURPOSES (AND THAT THEY COULD BE USED AS IS FOR MILITARY PURPOSES ON AN EMERGENCY BASIS). IN THE JORNAL DO BRASIL'S VERSION OF HIS REMARKS AT THE 26 APRIL SONDA-III LAUNCH, COLONEL PIVA WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE BRAZILIAN PROGRAM WAS SCIENTIFIC AND HAD ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH MILITARY STRATEGY "BECAUSE IT IS STILL TOO EARLY FOR THAT." WHILE THESE REMARKS MAY BE SOMEWHAT INSENSITIVE RESPONSES TO PROVOCATIVE PRESS QUESTIONING, THEY NONETHELESS

INDICATE A LACK OF CLEAR DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN MILITARY AND NON-MILITARY APPLICATIONS OF THE RAPIDLY-DEVELOPING BRAZILIAN ROCKETRY PROGRAM. END COMMENT.
END CONFIDENTIAL.
JOHNSON

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Message Attributes

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